

CENTROPOLIS

OR

METROPOLIS <sup>1</sup>

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PHOTO BY BOB SRENCO, SEPT. 1966



ABSTRACT - As urban growth spilled over the political boundaries of large, old central cities, and former satellite towns became suburbs and finally merged into a metropolis of more or less continuous urban development, certain central functions of the old Central Business District (CBD) shifted toward the new center of their market areas. Thus, a metropolis finds its old CBD "off center" geographically and functions drifted away toward the new time-distance center of the urbanized area. Hence, the metropolis becomes a centropolis as the new center emerges for providing certain central functions.

This article describes the interdependency and inter-relatedness of suburban residential, commercial, industrial growth and intra-metropolitan transportation development which, in combination, ultimately will create sufficient demand for central services in a new office location that will take on many of the characteristics of the old CBD but will not supplant it. Each will provide different central functions to essentially different people and activities.

The relative decline of the core city and its downtown, central business district has been a phenomena common to almost every American major metropolitan area since 1945. For example, the central business districts of most of these large cities have experienced declines in total retail sales relative to total retail volumes in the metropolitan areas, and thus are no longer as important as retailing centers. However, the proliferation of suburban shopping centers has not been followed generally by a similar proliferation of outlying office centers. The CBD remains the only major office center area in almost all American metropolitan areas; St. Louis and perhaps Los Angeles are the major exceptions.

It is the purpose of this paper to identify and discuss the forces which have in only twenty years transformed the city of Clayton, from a residential suburb into a major retailing center, and in more recent years, into an office center. We shall also discuss the nature of the office functions being performed in the Clayton business district. Finally, we shall attempt to ascertain whether the development of a second CBD in the St. Louis area is the result of a unique set of circumstances or whether we can expect similar developments in the St. Louis area or in other metropolitan areas. Thus, the paper will focus on the issue of whether the St. Louis metropolitan area will become a centropolis by virtue of a geographic shift of its central business district. In other words, will the CBD move as urban functions disperse, or is it rooted too deeply to move from its historic location?

# THE ST. LOUIS CBD AND THE CLAYTON CBD CBD IN THEIR METROPOLITAN CONTEXT



## LEGEND

- CLAYTON CBD
- ST. LOUIS CBD
- ▨ URBANIZED PORTION
- ST. LOUIS



## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Post World War II Metropolitan St. Louis, like many other American urban centers, has been experiencing important changes. Extensive new suburban growth has occurred, merging outlying towns and separate suburbs of former days. Many retailing and service businesses, even some manufacturing and warehousing, have grown up in the developing areas outside the older central city complex of St. Louis, East St. Louis, Granite City and adjacent communities. At the same time, aging, deteriorating areas of the central city complex have been the site of energetic urban renewal and redevelopment activities.

St. Louis City and County account for two-thirds of the population of the metropolitan area. The county population quadrupled between 1930 and 1966 from 212,000 to an estimated 845,000. Meanwhile, the population of the core city declined from 822,000 in 1930 to 685,000 in 1966 after reaching a peak of 857,000 in 1950. The decade of the fifties witnessed the largest, single urban-renewal project ever undertaken west of the Mississippi River encompassing a 454-acre tract extending from mid-St. Louis to the western edge of the downtown business district. About the same time there was a large amount of expressway demolition. The result was a flight to the suburbs. The rapid migration, from both the city and outside the metropolitan zone into St. Louis County, is still underway.

One of the most remarkable features of this change has been the growth of the City of Clayton, seat of St. Louis County. This former residential suburb has developed since the war into a leading retailing center of St. Louis County, and since about 1950, has become an office center rivaling downtown St. Louis. Clayton is the only center in the

metropolitan area, outside of the downtown St. Louis CBD, that possesses all of the components of a central business district. These components include a complete array of shopping, office, financial, and political functions, together with the necessary auxiliary facilities to service them (Figures 1 and 2).

Growth of new office centers, outside the older central cities, has for the most part, not followed the growth of suburban shopping centers in most other American metropolises. In the case of St. Louis, however, certain transportation developments and intrametropolitan movements of some urban functions were major factors in the ultimate emergence of Clayton as an office center. The City of St. Louis was born and nurtured by the river. As long as the river was its economic core, all manufacturing and commercial functions were adjacent.

The first railroads built on the Missouri side focused on downtown St. Louis to serve the commercial, wholesaling, warehousing, and manufacturing establishments already located along the wharf. With these two types of fixed transportation facilities, the river and railroads, the commercial and industrial life of the city was firmly rooted to the downtown focal point along the levee.

Local transportation facilities were built to serve the maximum volume of passenger traffic, and consequently also focused on downtown. This third fixed transportation development funneled even more life daily into the downtown CBD than in the past, and brought more business and social activity.

After the turn of the century, the automobile and truck, together with paved highways, almost imperceptibly over three decades, brought mobility to increasing numbers of people, and residential development



began to spill out into streetcar suburbs like Clayton as well as other railroad suburbs. As people moved out, so did their purchasing power. Retail and service functions followed these dollars. These were the first functions to succumb to urban sprawl.

As automobile usage increased and road improvement became a necessity, widening downtown streets was far more costly than widening others or even building new roads. Downtown streets consequently became the first to be congested.<sup>2</sup>

As the population center of the metropolis shifted slowly westward with the development and widespread use of electric streetcars, certain office functions, hotels, specialty shops, and medical offices that served a metropolitan market felt the simultaneous push of downtown congestion and the pull of a more central location. This shift westward, during the World War I period converged on Grand Avenue and a few decades later this exodus concentrated on the Kingshighway-Euclid area adjacent to the wealthier urban residents. This westward migration from the river followed the corridor that now terminates in west St. Louis County and passes through Clayton (Figure 3).

The massive mobility that the truck gave manufacturing activity was first evidenced with the development of the industrial concentration at Vandeventer and Chouteau (see Figure 3). The stockyards moved into this industrial district in the twenties so that farmers could truck their cattle more readily into their market. Other industry followed as it reached the point where rising distribution costs from the focus of greatest urban congestion overcame the forces of inertia and precedent. With the advent of the truck delivery and pick-up systems by local cartage firms, metropolitan manufacturing, wholesaling, and distribution activity



likewise could and did begin to move away from the highest rents and point of greatest congestion to cut transportation costs.

Extensive use of the automobile relieved industry of its labor market location. Companies could move to any metropolitan site that had access to sufficient road networks and parking. These locations were more plentiful and inexpensive on the metropolitan periphery and manufacturing began to move from the central city into the county. Evidence of this trend was the large increase of manufacturers in St. Louis County; from 155 in 1947 to 625 in 1964; thirty-six percent of this increase came from the city.<sup>3</sup> Manufacturing employment in the county exceeded 75,000 in 1965 as compared with 3,900 in 1947.<sup>4</sup> In addition, warehousing and wholesaling establishments increased from 388 in 1956 to 874 in 1964.<sup>5</sup> This suggests a positive correlation between the flight to the suburbs, the increase in the number of two-car families, and the rise of the suburban shopping center developments, the first of which was built in Clayton in 1948.<sup>6</sup>

#### The Rise of Clayton as a Central Business District

In 1875 a movement to separate the emergence of Clayton politically from the largely rural county was successful. In 1877, 204 acres of land about two miles west of the St. Louis boundary were offered and subsequently approved for the new county seat. The small town which grew up about the courthouse that was erected here was named Clayton.

It was not until 1913 that Clayton incorporated as a fourth-class city, and in accordance with Missouri law, began to annex adjacent unincorporated areas. At the same time, Clayton began to experience a residential building boom. By 1945, Clayton had emerged as a high-quality residential suburb, central and close to St. Louis with adequate transportation outlets serving it. The courthouse area was becoming a

well-known, arterial-ribbon shopping center. In spite of these advantages, it is still hard to believe what has happened in the twenty years since 1945.

Clayton developed into the leading shopping center of St. Louis County. The triggering mechanism for this was the construction of Famous-Barr Department Store in 1948. Clayton's contribution to 1963 retail sales was ten percent (\$97,000,000) of the county total with only five percent of the retail outlets.<sup>7</sup> Thus, this shopping complex is twice as effective as the average county retail establishment, implying that Clayton outlets serve more than a neighborhood market. Most important to this study, the retail growth apparently further encouraged office developments.

Attention was focused on Clayton as a potential office location in 1952 when Brown Shoe Company moved from the downtown CBD, and was followed in 1956 by Standard Oil. In the interim years (1952-1956), eighteen office buildings were constructed, and from 1956 to 1965, twenty-nine more. Clayton recognized early the importance of adequate parking facilities and rigidly enforced its building codes; consequently, off-street parking for these buildings is provided in the ratio of one parking space to every 300 square feet of office space.

Approximately 2.4 million square feet of office space have been built in Clayton, 1.1 million of which was built since 1958 as compared with a net of only 574,000 square feet in the St. Louis CBD between 1931 and 1961 (only three new office buildings were completed during this period). The revitalization of downtown St. Louis is reflected by what has happened to office building construction since 1961. Five new office buildings have been constructed and four are under construction. Three substantial



and several smaller buildings have been torn down. The net increase since 1961 has been 1.1 million square feet.

There also are nearly 300,000 square feet of new motel space and 17,400 square feet of new retail floor space that have been built since 1958 in the Clayton CBD. Retail workers increased from 3,200 to 4,200 between 1958 and 1963, according to the 1958 and the 1963 Censuses of Retail Trade<sup>8</sup> (Figure 4). Because of this recent growth, there is no question that during the daytime the Clayton central business district has a working population of several times the census size of the city.

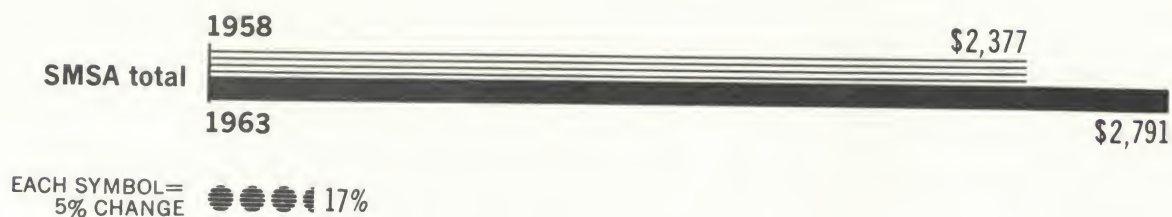
There appears to be no sign of let-up in this multi-phased building program. In view of this, traffic accommodations will become a priority consideration, since the Clayton business district is not served by thoroughfares radiating to all parts of the metropolitan area as is the St. Louis CBD.

The downtown St. Louis business building program of the 1960's has included completion of two new office buildings and eight more started or announced. In 1966 the estimated office floor space in Clayton was one-third the amount available in the St. Louis CBD. Thus, Clayton is subordinate to downtown St. Louis as an office center and its functions seem to be more restricted. This outlying CBD appears to be more, as the survey below reveals, a center for professional men, for branch sales, and for record-keeping offices.

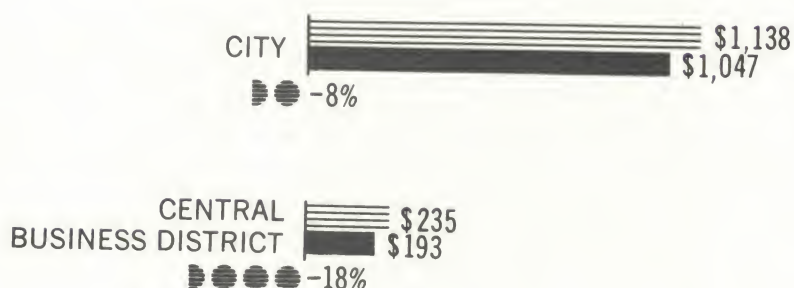
The following are the results of a questionnaire sent to the occupants of offices in the most recent twenty-eight buildings constructed in Clayton. In eleven of the buildings, one company occupies all or the greater part of the building and in the remaining seventeen there are many occupants. A total of 500 questionnaires were mailed and 386 (seventy-seven percent of the total) were returned. The answers are summarized in the accompanying Table 1.



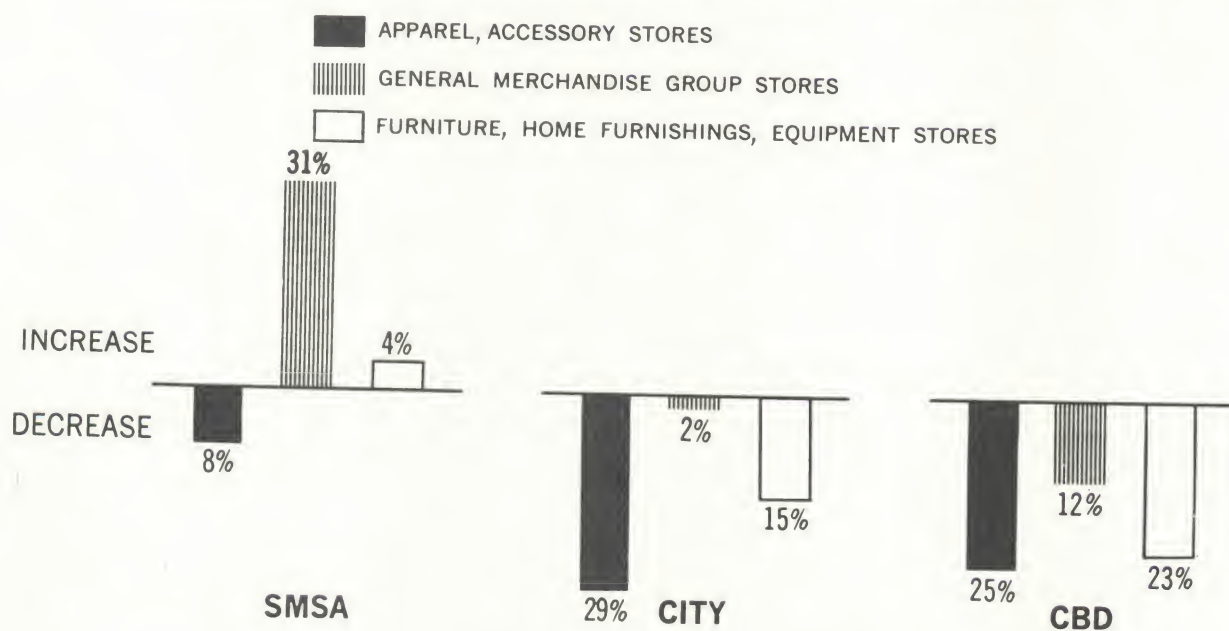
# CHANGING RETAIL PATTERN IN THE ST. LOUIS SMSA



## St. Louis



## Percent Change in Sales, 1958-1963 by Types of Stores



1963 CENSUS OF BUSINESS, U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census

TABLE 1.

Occupance of Clayton Office Buildings

1. Type of business, service, profession: Predominantly professional services and sales offices (the latter often of the branch type).

<u>Type of Business or Profession</u>	<u>% of Total</u>
All types of sales offices	25.0
Insurance	14.0
Medical and Dental	13.0
Lawyers	11.0
Real Estate and Property management	7.5
Finance companies, accountants	6.5
Associations, societies, non-profit agencies	5.0
Advertising and public relations	4.0
Others	<u>13.0</u>
Total	100 %

Many of these appear oriented either to Clayton's position near the center of a prosperous urban-suburban residential area or to the county seat function. Both professional and sales offices have the advantages of nearness to suburban homes of the office occupants. Clayton also is as accessible in terms of travel time to the airport as is downtown St. Louis.

2. Size of offices: Small generally, as measured by number of employees. This is expected since most are professional and branch or regional sales offices:

<u>Number of Employees</u>	<u>% of Total</u>
5 or less employees	61.0
6-15 employees	26.0
16 or more employees	<u>13.0</u>
Total	100 %

3. When did the offices move here? Primarily in the last decade.

<u>Time of Moving or Originating</u>	<u>% of Total</u>
Before 1959	8.0
1950-54	13.0
1955-59	23.0
1960-65	53.0
Originated here	<u>3.0</u>
Total	100 %

4. Origin of offices.

<u>Place of Origin</u>	<u>% Main or only Office</u>	<u>% of Total</u>
Originated in Clayton (young doctors, lawyers, etc.)	67.0	30.0
Migrated from downtown CBD (east of 12th street)	54.0	28.0
Migrated from elsewhere in metropolitan area besides downtown (especially from St. Louis - 12th Street to Kingshighway Blvd.)	50.0	33.0
Migrated from outside the metropolitan area.	32.0	<u>9.0</u>
Total		100 %

5. Why have the offices selected Clayton as a location?

Major Reasons:

Relief from traffic and congestion

Central location of Clayton

Less commuting to Clayton

Other reasons frequently cited:

High quality and attractiveness of Clayton with excellent shopping facilities and nearby quality apartment and other residential developments. This is in great contrast to the older office locations in St. Louis and is often superior to other office locations in St. Louis County (essentially prestige and amenity considerations).



Source: The St. Louis County Business and Industrial Development Commission  
Questionn.

#### FUTURE OF THE CLAYTON BUSINESS DISTRICT

There appear to be three possible alternatives for the metropolitan area:

1. Clayton will supersede downtown.
2. Clayton will continue to develop as a second CBD, supplementing and complementing, but not duplicating downtown St. Louis activities.
3. Several additional secondary office centers will eventually develop (as in Los Angeles) in the greater metropolitan area.

1. It is highly unlikely that the downtown CBD could be replaced as the major business center for St. Louis in the foreseeable future. The major financial institutions are all located within a few blocks of the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis. Because Missouri has unit banking laws, the only banks which are of sufficient size to adequately serve the needs of large business and manufacturing firms are those situated in the CBD.

Downtown St. Louis still possesses the largest number of department stores in any single location, a factor important in comparison shopping. Clayton has ceased to grow significantly in recent years either in total retail sales or number of units. Substantial investments have been made and are under consideration in other parts of St. Louis County. Furthermore, the shopping and office facilities of downtown St. Louis are far more conveniently located with respect to the growing Illinois portion of the St. Louis metropolitan area than in the Clayton area.

There are many factors which suggest a revival of manufacturing activity in the east-side portion of the metropolitan zone and an accompanying population increase.<sup>9</sup>

2. The second alternative seems most probable. Clayton already has an excellent start, a central location, a county seat function, potential high-rise office sites, and less air pollution than downtown St. Louis. These same factors, however, will also encourage the third development, that of further office decentralization to other county locations.

The impact of transportation development on the distribution of urban functions within the metropolitan area supports this conclusion of the increasing role of the Clayton CBD. Manufacturing and warehousing activity is distributed in a pattern that rings the Clayton area. Hence, this industrial activity needs the services of, and proximity to a CBD other than the congested downtown area. In terms of travel time from these outlying industrial sites, Clayton is probably the most central geographic point in the economic sphere of the Missouri portion of the metropolis, and would therefore become the hub if the metropolis were to evolve into a centropolis.

Further, the criss-cross of commuting that will be possible with the completion of two expressways across the county will facilitate auto transportation into Clayton on a scale never remotely possible heretofore. Concomitantly these transportation improvements will open thousands of additional acres in the speculator's belt beyond the circumferential highway for county-wide residential, commercial and industrial development that will generate more demand for office services from Clayton.



Highway system completion in the next five years will draw more manufacturers with regional and national markets serviced by truck delivery to this peripheral location for more efficient and economical operation. However, not all manufacturing activity in the downtown CBD should, or will, move in those instances where the operation is dependent on another activity located in the downtown area. (For example: printers convenient to downtown advertising agencies.) But those industries with regional and national markets, if located on the periphery, can face toward the market they serve and most will not have to pay bridge fares or ship through or around a congested CBD, thereby reducing their shipping times and distances.

The boil and bubble of urban building throughout the metropolitan region, the turmoil created by population growth and movement, the tug-of-war between the central city and the suburbs, the push and pull of countervailing urban forces, simultaneously attracting and pulling people, jobs, and purchasing power, nets down to a winnowing process that is changing the character of both the metropolitan center and its periphery.

It is the result of this sorting-out process that we are trying to identify. Clearly, one result will be a demand for more office space in Clayton. This increasing demand will result from residential, industrial, warehousing, and wholesaling growth largely outside of Clayton.<sup>10</sup> This increasing demand for services in a central location such as Clayton provides will be largely at the expense of the downtown CBD and will exist as long as congestion does not increase the cost of transportation in terms of both time and money. In turn, as office functions increase in Clayton, so will functions (e.g., apparel shops, restaurants and related activities).



To avoid this cost of congestion, off-street parking is mandatory in Clayton. Likewise, better cross-county arteries are vital to improved access. Also, a rapid transit system between Clayton and downtown St. Louis merits investigation as part of any metropolitan transportation study.

Co-extensive with the major east-west axis of metropolitan growth is the backbone of cultural, recreational and educational life of the St. Louis region, many of the luxury apartment buildings, the most expensive residences and the highest income families in the city; and, of course, at the end points of the axis reside almost all the rest of the community activities of the St. Louis metropolitan area. Staying on this axis, one is isolated from virtually none of the "extra-industrial" activity of the urban area.

This mushrooming Clayton office function, clearly emerging within the last decade, is by no means attributable exclusively to the automobile in the same sense that the growth of the twenty-four, semi-dependent suburbs of the Los Angeles area has been. A downtown St. Louis clearly was established and firmly entrenched for almost 150 years, reached by the river, railroads and all public transit facilities, prior to the advent of the automobile. Nevertheless, a new shape for the St. Louis urban agglomeration is emerging, owing to a combination of forces that have emerged on the heels of changing transportation technology. The old CBD retains many of its decision-making functions with respect to specialty and department store shopping, finance, legal, hotels, culture, and entertainment. It is still the central intelligence center of the metropolis.

3. No permanent land use allocation is conceivable in metropolitan St. Louis as long as the automobile is on the ascendancy as a means of transportation. Clayton is off to a good start as an

office and service hub, but if congestion of any severe magnitude develops, and it is entirely possible, a new center of centers will inevitably develop to relieve congestion, for precisely the same reasons as Clayton emerged to relieve the congestion in downtown St. Louis.

#### APPLICATION OF CENTRAL PLACE THEORY AND NEED FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATION

Each separate business service rendered from an office location can be regarded as a central place function. For each function there is a market area which describes the territorial range in which that service can be performed, provided the purchasing power within that territory is adequate to command a minimum profitable volume of that business service. The geographical size of the territorial range will vary from service to service depending on the internal economic characteristics of the firm that set minimum profitable levels (dollar thresholds) of volume and the proximity of competing central place locations from which the same service is provided.<sup>11</sup>

If this aspect of central place theory has validity, the office functions now being performed in Clayton for households in St. Louis County (e.g., medical, dental, legal) and the business services rendered to manufacturers, wholesalers, and warehouses (e.g., motel service, advertising, legal, engineering, architectural, accounting, and others) already have reached a minimum profitable volume for each of these services for many firms. As the population and its purchasing power increases in St. Louis County, resulting from both migration and incubation of these activities, more dollar thresholds of demand will be crossed for additional services and more service establishments undoubtedly will move to Clayton to serve their markets or incubate there themselves.



If this happens, it ultimately may necessitate a rapid transit system built in the median strip of the circumferential highway with stops at each of the interchanges.

Meanwhile, downtown St. Louis has suffered from the trends that are typical of today's metropolis, according to the Urban Land Institute. Post-war developments have left metropolitan CBD's across the country with<sup>12</sup>

diminishing market, outmoded transportation, insufficient or poorly located parking, high taxes, deteriorating or obsolescent structures, deficient street patterns and a has-been image. As if this were not enough, the once dominant city center frequently was choked in a collar of blight created by dowdy surrounding areas. Complacency gave way to discouragement as more and more enterprises fled the typical city core. Today's most practical downtown improvement programs seek to make the core area a complete center--the governmental, retail, cultural, entertainment, office, financial, hotel and convention center of the metropolis.

Although the city of St. Louis has been far more practical than many other midwestern metropolises in its downtown improvement program, and is well on its way to equalling the scale of Pittsburgh's exciting Golden Triangle renaissance, it cannot expect to recapture those office functions which are now provided in Clayton to St. Louis County. The downtown CBD can retain and build upon its existing comparative advantage. Nevertheless, two major business centers offering basically different services and functions clearly exist today in the metropolis, with territorial ranges and roles that do not significantly overlap.



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### Footnotes

1. The author is deeply indebted to Professor Earl Kerstern, University of Nevada, Department of Geography, who as a visiting professor at Washington University, conducted the Clayton Office Survey and helped analyze and interpret the results. Also, the editorial suggestions of Dr. Leroy J. Grossman, RIDC Director of Economic Research, were extremely helpful in the final preparation of this report. The assistance of Donald G. Dunshee and Ann Van Der Meulen likewise are acknowledged with gratitude.
2. According to Allen W. Merrell, Ford Motor Company's Vice President of Civic and Governmental Affairs, "Today only five to ten percent of all trips in urban areas begin or end downtown. The remaining trips are widely dispersed."
3. Source: County Business Patterns, 1947, and Local Industry Survey, St. Louis County Business and Industrial Development Commission.
4. Source: County Business Patterns, 1947, an estimate prepared by St. Louis County BIDC.
5. County Business Patterns, 1956 and 1964.
6. According to the National Planning Association, retail trade volume in the CBD's of 24 metropolitan areas increased only 1 percent between 1948 and 1954, while suburban retail trade increased 53 percent. Hence, retail trade growth in Clayton was not unique.
7. 1963 Census of Business.
8. 1958 and 1963 Census of Retail Trade.

Footnotes (cont.)

9. RIDC county-by-county population forecast for the St. Louis Region and studies prepared by the Southwestern Illinois Metropolitan Area Planning Commission, 1966.
10. The National Planning Association estimates that suburban population growth between 1960 and 1975 will be two or three times greater than central city growth. St. Louis Metropolitan population growth therefore is not unique in its distribution.
11. B. J. L. Berry and W. L. Garrison "Recent Developments of Central Place Theory" Papers and Proceedings of the Regional Science Assoc., Vol. 4 (1958), P. 111.
12. M. D. Moore, (Ed.), "Downtown Denver--A guide to Central City Development", Urban Land Institute Technical Bulletin 54, Washington D.C., (1965). P. 7.



Captions for Illustrative Matter

- Fig. 1. The Clayton CBD - Photo by Bob Srenco, September, 1966.
- Fig. 2. The St. Louis CBD and the Clayton CBD in their Metropolitan  
Context - 1963 Census of Business, (Washington D.C.:  
Bureau of the Census, 1963).
- Fig. 3. The Culture Corridor of St. Louis.
- Fig. 4. Changing Retail Pattern in the St. Louis SMSA - 1963  
Census of Business, (Washington D.C.: Bureau of the  
Census, 1963)